

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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R 101100Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1408

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSYBEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1901

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY

SUBJECT: GOLAN HEIGHTS RESETTLEMENT

REF: DAMASCUS 1882

SUMMARY: ON BRIEF TRIP TO KUNEITRA SEPTEMBER 7, EMBOFF
OBSERVED REFUGEES FROM VILLAGES BETWEEN SASA AND KUNEITRA
HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES AND ARE IN THE PROCESS OF
RECONSTRUCTION. JUDGING FROM HEAVY CIVILIAN BUS TRAFFIC
OBSERVED LEAVING MAIN ROAD FOR VILLAGES ON SLOPES OF MT.
HERMAN, THOSE VILLAGES ALSO WOULD SEEM TO BE RESETTLED.
END SUMMARY.

1. DESPITE DESOLATION OF TERRAIN BETWEEN SASA, VILLAGE
WHICH REMAINED IN SYRIAN HANDS, AND KUNEITRA,
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VILLAGERS IN THAT AREA HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES. IN EVIDENCE

ALONG THE MAIN ROAD ARE HOUSES IN PROCESS OF BEING REPAIRED. SOME HOUSES HAVE NEW ADOBE WALLS; MOST HAVE NEW AND SHINY TIN ROOFS. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE NUMEROUS DUMPS OF CONCRETE BLOCKS, SAND, AND CEMENT, BEING USED TO RE-BUILD MORE SUBSTANTIAL HOUSES WHICH IN MANY CASES WERE ALMOST TOTALLY DESTROYED.

2. LIFE IN THESE VILLAGES APPEARED CLOSE TO NORMAL. THERE ARE LARGE HERDS OF GOATS AND SHEEP, AND CHILDREN SEEM TO BE EVERYWHERE. GARDEN PLOTS ADJACENT TO HOUSES HAVE BEEN FRESHLY HOED. IN SEVERAL HOUSES EMBOFF VIEWED, RETURNING FAMILIES HAVE BROUGHT THEIR VALUABLES OF CARPETS, PICTURES, AND FURNITURE.

3. JUST SOUTH OF DAMASCUS, THERE IS JUNCTION WHERE IMPORTANT ROAD BEARS OFF KUNEITRA HIGHWAY TO QATANA AND LARGE MILITARY COMPLEX LOCATED THERE. BEYOND THIS JUNCTION THERE WAS VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE OF SYRIAN MILITARY ALONG THE KUNEITRA ROAD. THERE WERE OCCASIONAL SOLDIERS SEEKING LIFTS AND A FEW EMPTY MILITARY TRUCKS. IF THERE ARE TROOPS IN THESE VILLAGES BETWEEN SASA AND KUNEITRA, THEY ARE WELL HIDDEN, EVEN TO EXTENT OF HANGING WASH ELSEWHERE, AS CLOTHES ON LINES NOT REGULAR MILITARY ISSUE.

4. EMBOFF DID NOT LEAVE MAIN ROAD. HE OBSERVED, HOWEVER, REGULAR AND HEAVY CIVILIAN BUS SERVICE TO VILLAGES ABOVE MAIN ROAD AND TO OTHERS ON SLOPES OF MT. HERMON. AGAIN, MILITARY WAS NOT IN EVIDENCE. MOST PASSENGERS WERE WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

5. ONLY ADDITIONAL POINT IS THAT ACCESS TO AREA VIRTUALLY UNHINDERED BY SARG. EMBOFF WAS NOT REQUIRED TO GET PERMISSION TO VISIT KUNEITRA. CAR STOPPED ONLY AT ONE SYRIAN CHECKPOINT NEAR MILITARY BASE ON OUTSKIRTS DAMASCUS. OTHERWISE, TRIP WAS UN-EVENTFUL AND CAUSED NO NOTICE FROM PASSERSBY.
MURPHY

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